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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001080

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SUBJECT: COR SPEAKER MAHMOUD MASHADANI DEEMS POLITICAL COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL SECURITY MEETING SUCCESSFUL

REF: BAGHDAD 1066

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani told us the Political Council for National Security (PCNS) meeting (Saturday, April 5, 2008) was successful in bridging the key differences between the political blocs. He added the CoR will work to ban armed militias from getting involved with the provincial elections. He is also optimistic that parties outside the government (i.e., Tawafiq, Iraqiyya, Fadila and Sadrists) will return to the GOI. Mashadani encouraged PM Maliki to speak to the CoR on April 8, and noted he would stop the session if the Sadrists get out of line. Mashadani is concerned about the overwhelming influence of the Iranians in Iraq and on the Sadrists in particular and stressed "enough is enough." He is supportive of PM Maliki spending a five billion dollar surplus toward infrastructure projects and services to help the Iraqi people. He is also interested in starting up a "Youth Parliament" project to train the next generation of Iraqi parliamentarians. End Summary.

PCNS MEETING SUCCESSFUL

¶12. (C) Mashadani told PolCouns and NSC Senior Director for Iraq and Afghanistan McGurk on April 6, 2008, that the Political Council for National Security (PCNS) meeting (Saturday, 4/5/08) was the most successful and productive meeting he has ever attended. He described the discussion as free and open and supportive of provincial elections. "The choice before us," said Mashadani, "is whether we are going to build a strong national government or be continuously in conflict." He said it was obvious to all those present at the PCNS meeting that militias need to be eliminated. At the same time, Mashadani noted almost every political bloc has their own militias so this will be a challenge. "Any bloc that does not dissolve its militias," said Mashadani, "does not believe in a peaceful transfer of power." He added militias cannot be part of provincial elections, targeted to occur by October 1, 2008, and said this is a driving force behind the political parties' willingness to disband them. The CoR, he said will issue legislation toward this end.

¶13. (C) Mashadani said the parties agreed to strengthen the GOI, and that he personally was optimistic the political parties that previously withdrew from the GOI would return. He said there is also a need to establish a policy against Iranian interference. The way to achieve these objectives, said Mashadani, is to create a vibrant legislative and executive branch. Mashadani said there was complete agreement from all the parties on these goals, but noted Nasar Rubaie (Sadrist bloc leader) was the only person to express reservations during the PCNS meeting about dissolving militias.

¶14. (C) Asked about the possibility of PM Maliki addressing the CoR Tuesday, April 8, Mashadani said, "he is always welcome." He said it is a good idea for the Prime Minister to come to the CoR and explain the situation in Basrah first-hand. Given the unanimous support of the GOI in the PCNS meeting, Mashadani noted PM Maliki's attendance at the Iraqi Parliament will be important. In response to McGurk's question on whether there will be opposition from the Sadrists regarding the PM's presence at the CoR, Mashadani shrugged his shoulders and said he did not think any "red lines" would be crossed. If so, he promised to close or stop the session. However, he sees the willingness of the PM to speak before the CoR as a healthy sign, adding: "If the Prime Minister can charge into Basrah and fight militias, he should have the courage to come to the Parliament."

IRANIAN INFLUENCE

¶15. (C) Mashadani is increasingly concerned about Iranian influence in Iraq, and complained that the Sadrists seemed to owe more loyalty to Tehran than to Baghdad. He said the Sadrists are being used by the Iranians. Mashadani also talked about a meeting that afternoon with Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari where they both agreed to stand together against Iranian influence. "Enough is enough," Mashadani stressed. More education, he noted, is needed with the Sadrists on this issue. Mashadani criticized the fact that Moqtada al-Sadr (MaS) is currently in Iran rather than Iraq. He also said President Talabani recently met with Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Brigadier General Qasim Suleimani

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and asked (referring to Sadr), "Why do you keep him?" Mashadani is interested in paying a visit to MaS and expressed concern he may be "brainwashed" if he remains out of the country much longer.

SPENDING THE IRAQI SURPLUS

¶16. (C) McGurk emphasized with Mashadani the importance of the GOI using some its resources to invest in economic projects that will improve infrastructure and security. Towards this end, he said PM Maliki had dedicated a five billion surplus to use towards infrastructure projects. McGurk emphasized it is important the Iraqis step up and achieve their economic objectives, given that they are making positive strides on the political and security fronts. Mashadani agreed the Iraqi people need assistance now and the country cannot afford to wait eight or ten years to make these infrastructure improvements. Mashadani proposed using twenty percent of the oil revenue for services and infrastructure during the next three years. He noted that, unfortunately, the current Ministry of Oil (Husayn Shahristani-UIA)) and Minister of Finance (Bayan Jabr-UIA/ISCI), are not supportive of using oil revenues towards these efforts.

YOUTH PARLIAMENT: TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

¶17. (SBU) Mashadani told PolCouns he would welcome USG assistance in creating an NGO to foster national unity, democracy, and political participation via a "Youth Parliament," which will train the next generation. "We need to create a new institute without any agendas, political identity, or ethnic or religious affiliations," said Mashadani. Training youth on the peaceful transfer of power, he stressed, will be key to rebuilding Iraq's future. Mashadani said there is hope that the younger generation will not be tied to political agendas or sectarianism.

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